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BAY REFLECTIONS

News from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program

June 2020

Check Out Our Featured Stories

Manatee County Recreation Division Staff Step Up for Preserves During COVID-19

Hudson Bayou In-Stream Restoration Project Improves Water Quality and Habitat

Manatee County to Bring Even More Habitat and Fun to Robinson Preserve with $2.8M Project

Contribute to Science from Home!

WaterGoats Capture Tidal Creek Trash

Dear readers,

Our mission statement concludes with this phrase: “The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program strives to improve water quality, increase habitat, and enhance natural resources of the area for the use and enjoyment of the public.”

Real progress in our mission depends upon equitable access for all people to the natural resources that the SBEP partnership works to restore. People of color and low-income communities bear greater burdens of environmental risk and enjoy fewer benefits of environmental protections than the general population. SBEP aims to deepen our environmental justice practice by working alongside others to improve the health and environment of overburdened communities. We will continue outreach programs to promote environmental justice, including grantmaking to advance environmental health in communities that are closest to pollution sources and furthest from parks, educational kayak tours for youth living in public housing, and Sarasota Bay Guardians volunteer events organized around community environmental concerns and aspirations.

This work is an integral part of our mission to restore our area’s greatest natural asset – Sarasota Bay.

Manatee County Recreation Division Staff Step Up for Preserves During COVID-19

We asked our partners in the Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Department to tell us how their staff adapted to physical distancing during the COVID-19 epidemic while maintaining and enhancing Manatee County’s beautiful parks and preserves. Our hats are off to these staff members for their impressive work.



Derek Marshall and MJ Ross building oyster bars in Perico Bayou

Thanks to Damon Moore, Division Manager of Ecological and Marine Resources, Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Department for this writeup.

As the Manatee County Parks and Natural Resources Department implemented social distancing requirements among staff, many of the Recreation Division staff whose normal duties include things like training the aquatic center life guards, maintaining tennis facilities, and front desk customer service found themselves stepping into new roles on the County's natural areas. The Director of the Parks and Natural Resources Department, Charlie Hunsicker, challenged his team to keep each other safe as the number one priority, and keep people working on a backlog of projects at the Preserves that could be done safely. As Charlie put it, "Much like the Civilian Conservation Corps programs during the 1930s, we have plenty of opportunities for County employee field work in our preserves over the coming weeks as on site or workstation requirements for employees begin to diminish over a prolonged closing." He instructed the Preserves staff, who can easily meet social distancing requirements working across the 30,000 acres of County Preserves, to bring appropriate tasks and projects forward and implement the work under CDC guidelines for COVID-19 with the Recreation Division team members. The Recreation Division stepped up and has been getting lots of important work done in the preserves to the benefit of Manatee County's natural resources.

Click to see projects and photos >

Hudson Bayou In-Stream Restoration Project Improves Water Quality & Habitat

Sarasota County, with project partners including the City of Sarasota, SBEP, and the Sarasota County School Board have completed the Hudson Bayou In-Stream Restoration and Water Quality Improvements project with funding support from the Southwest Florida Water Management District. This initiative integrated multiple habitat and water quality improvement features into two main canals of Hudson Bayou located at Sarasota High School.





Vegetated filter marsh (left) and skimmer device (right), Credit Sarasota County





Bioswale enhancement (left) and upland plantings (right), Credit Sarasota County

Overall, the project:

- Enhanced bioswales and upland plantings
- Redirected parking lot runoff into bioswale treatment systems
- Removed large Australian pines, carrotwood, Brazilian pepper, and other invasive vegetation
- Installed a skimmer structure to collect floating litter

- Created a tree island preservation area with an additional channel for flow through a vegetated filter marsh
- Created a sediment sump for collection and removal

These enhancements will help remove nutrients from upstream runoff coming from 973 acres, or about 40% of the Hudson Bayou watershed. The water quality treatments are estimated to remove about 25% of total nitrogen and 67% of total suspended solids annually. In 2019, the project was awarded Public Works Project of the Year for the environmental category by the American Public Works Association (APWA) Suncoast Chapter.

Read More about the Hudson Bayou Restoration Project >

Manatee County to Bring Even More Habitat and Fun to Robinson Preserve with $2.8M Project



Manatee County's Robinson Preserve Expansion area is getting ready for a makeover that will bring more quality habitat for wildlife and more fun for people who love the preserve. Trails are closed while staff work on the upgrades, so we took a peek behind the scenes in a blog post on our website.

Check out what's coming for the Expansion >

Contribute to Science From Home!



Photograph by Wikipedia user Srloarie2, distributed under a CC BY-SA 4.0 license.

Looking for something to do around your home or neighborhood? Consider becoming a full-fledged citizen scientist! All you need is a phone, your peepers, and the desire to discover. Join Selby Gardens for monthly EcoQuest Challenges, help NASA classify coral reefs, track climate change in real time, host home bioblitz competitions, and learn more about local opportunities to contribute to science in our blog post.

Get Involved with Citizen Science >

WaterGoats Capture Tidal Creek Trash



Photo Credit: Sarasota County

There's a new trash collector in town. This year, Sarasota County purchased ten WaterGoats and will be installing them in local creeks and canals in the Sarasota Bay watershed. These devices help capture floating litter so it can be removed before making its way further downstream or into the bay. Sarasota County estimates that hundreds of pounds of trash will be prevented from polluting our waterways with these new devices. So far, four WaterGoats have been installed, one in Hudson Bayou, one in Whitaker Bayou, and two in Matheny Creek.

The City of Sarasota and Sarasota High School have also partnered on this initiative. They recently sponsored a WaterGoat in Hudson Bayou near Sarasota High School and have already seen promising results.

The first cleanout in May yielded 45lbs of recyclables and trash. Throughout the year, students and partners will continue to clean out and monitor the progress of these "trash collecting" machines.



Bite-Size Bay News



Roskamp Institute researchers funded to study human neurological impacts of red tide

The two-year study aims to track health effects in 400 volunteers in Sarasota and Manatee Counties. The research will investigate relationships between levels of brevetoxin in blood samples and neurological symptoms.

Read More About the Roskamp Red Tide Study >

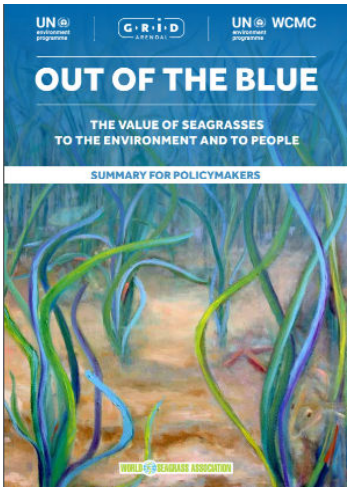


FGCU & Mote Marine Lab to study if dead fish are feeding red tide

Researchers from Mote Marine Laboratory and Florida Gulf Coast University will collaborate on a study to determine if there is a correlation between the presence of dead fish and nutrient levels in coastal waters.

Read More About the FGCU-Mote Red Tide Study >

Sarasota County Seagrass Survey highlighted in UN Environment Programme seagrass report



This report underscores the unique values that seagrasses provide to people around the world and the risks in losing seagrasses in the age of climate change and ongoing global habitat loss and degradation. The report shares lessons learned with the intent of informing management priorities.

Read the UNEP report "Out of the Blue" >

Ways to Help Protect Our Waters this Summer



Be a Waterwise Champ

Despite recent rains, the Southwest Florida Water Management District Phase I Water Shortage declaration is effective through July 1, 2020, meaning that restrictions are in place to reduce outdoor water use. Please follow guidelines from your local municipality (Manatee County, Sarasota County, City of Bradenton, City of Sarasota, Town of Longboat Key, City of Venice).



Photo Credit: Science and Environment Council

Support Local Seafood Producers

Our region plays an important role in the commercial fishing industry in the U.S. Over the last 10 years, our local Gulf Coast fisheries have contributed about 18% of the total landings in the country. We are lucky to live so close to places like the Cortez Fishing Village that offer access to fresh, local seafood and a rich history that shaped the story of Sarasota Bay.



Eating locally caught and farmed seafood supports our economy and our environment. Cutting the distance seafood travels reduces carbon emissions and other pollutants that can affect our waters directly. The science-based management that regulates U.S. fisheries means that it's generally a sustainable choice to buy U.S. caught or farmed fish and shellfish. However, some choices are still better than others. Make sure to use a sustainability guide, such as the Seafood Watch Guide for the southeastern U.S., to make sure that you're making the best possible choices.

Printable Seafood Watch Guide >

Seafood Watch Mobile App >

Branch Out
Most Americans don't eat much seafood, and when we do, it's often tuna, shrimp, or salmon. We're fortunate to have some of the most sustainably-caught shrimp on the planet available locally from the Gulf of Mexico, but there are many other delicious local fish and shellfish options. Some of the best local, widely-available choices include striped mullet, pompano, and clams.

Cook at Home
Search for Florida seafood & agricultural products near you using the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Service's "Florida Farm to You" tool. (Choose "Seafood" from the drop-down menu.)

Check out this list of Sarasota-area seafood markets from Visit Sarasota. If you're in Bradenton, just head to Cortez.

Florida Sea Grant Agents are cooking seafood dinners live on Facebook! Check out their weekly "Seafood at Your Fingertips" videos for tips on how to prep what you bring home.

Eat Local in Restaurants
Most restaurants that serve locally-caught fish will advertise it. If you're in doubt about where the fish comes from, simply ask!

Sarasota Bay Deep Dive Interviews

Live on SBEP's Facebook and YouTube pages

Tuesday, June 16
12:00 PM ET
"Zero Waste for Watersheds" with Tracie Troxler, Executive Director of Sunshine Community Compost

Tuesday, June 23
12:00 PM ET
"Sarasota Passive Acoustic Listening Station



(PALS) Network" with Athena Rycyk, Ph.D. (Assistant Professor, New College of Florida), David Mann, Ph.D. (President, Loggerhead Instruments), and Katherine McHugh, Ph.D. (Staff Scientist, Chicago Zoological Society's Sarasota Dolphin Research Program)

Join SBEP on Facebook Live or YouTube for Deep Dives: short chats and Q&As with people working to restore Sarasota Bay. We welcome comments and questions from audience members of all ages!

So far, we've explored seagrass, horseshoe crabs, ocean acidification, environmental education, wetlands, shellfish restoration, local seafood, dolphin research, and more. **Missed an episode?** Visit our Facebook or YouTube Channel for a full list of videos.

Classes and Virtual Events

Florida Sea Grant Seafood at Your Fingertips LIVE

Wednesdays at 6PM



Join Florida Sea Grant for Facebook Live cooking demonstration videos with step-by-step guidance for selecting and preparing seafood. Viewers will learn about smart seafood choices, sustainable fisheries, and health benefits of eating seafood.

Watch "Seafood at Your Fingertips" >

2020 Lionfish Challenge

Now through September 7th



The Lionfish Challenge, hosted by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, is an incentive program that rewards harvesters for their lionfish removals. The participant who harvests the most lionfish between May 22nd and September 7th will be crowned the Lionfish King/Queen.

Compete in the 2020 Lionfish Challenge >

National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation (NNOCCI)

Climate Communications Virtual Crash Course



Register for the NNOCCI Climate Communication Course >

Sarasota County Energy Upgrade Volunteer Training

September 16th, 9AM - 3PM

Are you interested in learning how to save energy and water while helping low-income residents in our community? Become an Energy

ENERGYupgrade

Know More. Do More. Save More.

Coach and help Sarasota County become a more sustainable community and better place to live for generations to come.

Register to Become an Energy Coach >

Outdoor InvestiGATOR



Join scientists from UF/IFAS Extension on a FREE (virtual) educational adventure of your backyard. You can investigate the world of insects, learn about animal signs, and go on a BioBlitz!

Register to for Outdoor InvestiGATOR >

Upcoming University of Florida/IFAS Extension Webinars

Sarasota County

Manatee County

NOAA Digital Coast Trainings



Data, tools, and training for the coastal management community.

Register for a NOAA Digital Coast Training >

Water Reading from Around the Web

Otherworldly, String-Like Organism Spotted in Deep Sea Is Made Up of 'Millions of Interconnected Clones'



"Researchers have captured fascinating video footage of an otherworldly organism in the waters off the coast of Western Australia. With the help of lasers mounted onto their ROV, the Falkor scientists estimated that this siphonophore's outer ring measured 49 feet in diameter, suggesting that this section alone is 154 foot in length, or about as tall as an 11-story building."

Read more in Newsweek >

"The Rolling, Lurching, Vomit-Inducing Road to a Seasickness Cure"



Maybe you're fortunate enough not to get seasick, but you've had the strange experience of trying to fall asleep after a boat trip and failing because... is the bed moving? This piece explores the whys and hows of seasickness and the history of different treatments. It's a fun ride, no queasiness involved.

Read in Hakai Magazine >

Request a (Virtual) Speaker from SBEP

SBEP staff members regularly speak to homeowner, neighborhood, and community groups and upper-level classrooms about Sarasota Bay ecology and restoration. Weekday and evening presentations are now being scheduled through

summer 2020. Call the SBEP office at (941) 955-8085 or click the button below to request a speaker for your group.



Visit the SBEP website to schedule a speaker >

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Bay Reflections is the quarterly e-newsletter from the Sarasota Bay Estuary Program.

The Sarasota Bay Estuary Program is dedicated to restoring the area's greatest natural asset - Sarasota Bay. We offer special thanks to our partners: Sarasota County, Manatee County, City of Sarasota, City of Bradenton, Town of Longboat Key, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection and the Southwest Florida Water Management District.

Our office is located in the Federal Building in downtown Sarasota:
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